CALIFORNIA EARLY START

Early Start Transition

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

CALIFORNIA EARLY START for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities and Their Families

Early Intervention services system encouraging partnerships between families and professionals, family support, and coordination of services.

Names, Numbers And Dates To Remember:

Contacts:

Early Start Service Coordinator: _____

Phone Number: _____

Early Start Program Manager: _____

Phone Number: _____

SDRC Service Coordinator: _____

Phone Number: _____

SDRC Program Manager: _____

Phone Number: _____

Education Contact: _____

Phone Number: _____

Exceptional Family Resource Center Contact: _____

Phone Number: _____

Scheduled Evaluations/Meetings:

Medical Evaluation (if applicable):

Date: _____ Time: _____

Developmental/Psychological Evaluation:

Date: _____ Time: _____

Final Review of IFSP:

Date: _____ Time: _____

Other Meetings:

_____

_____

_____

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Dear Parents,

Because the Early Start Program ends at age three, this booklet is designed to inform you of the processes and the procedures that take place in the final year before your child "graduates" from Early Start. We also provide information about services that come after age three. The process of moving out of Early Start and beginning new options at age three is called "Transition."

Early Start Transition is a time to celebrate your child's progress. It is also a time to make decisions about what happens next to support your child's growth and development. Your child may no longer need special services after Early Start or your child may continue to be eligible for special services; either way, we hope this booklet will give you the information you need to make it easier for you and your child to prepare for the changes.

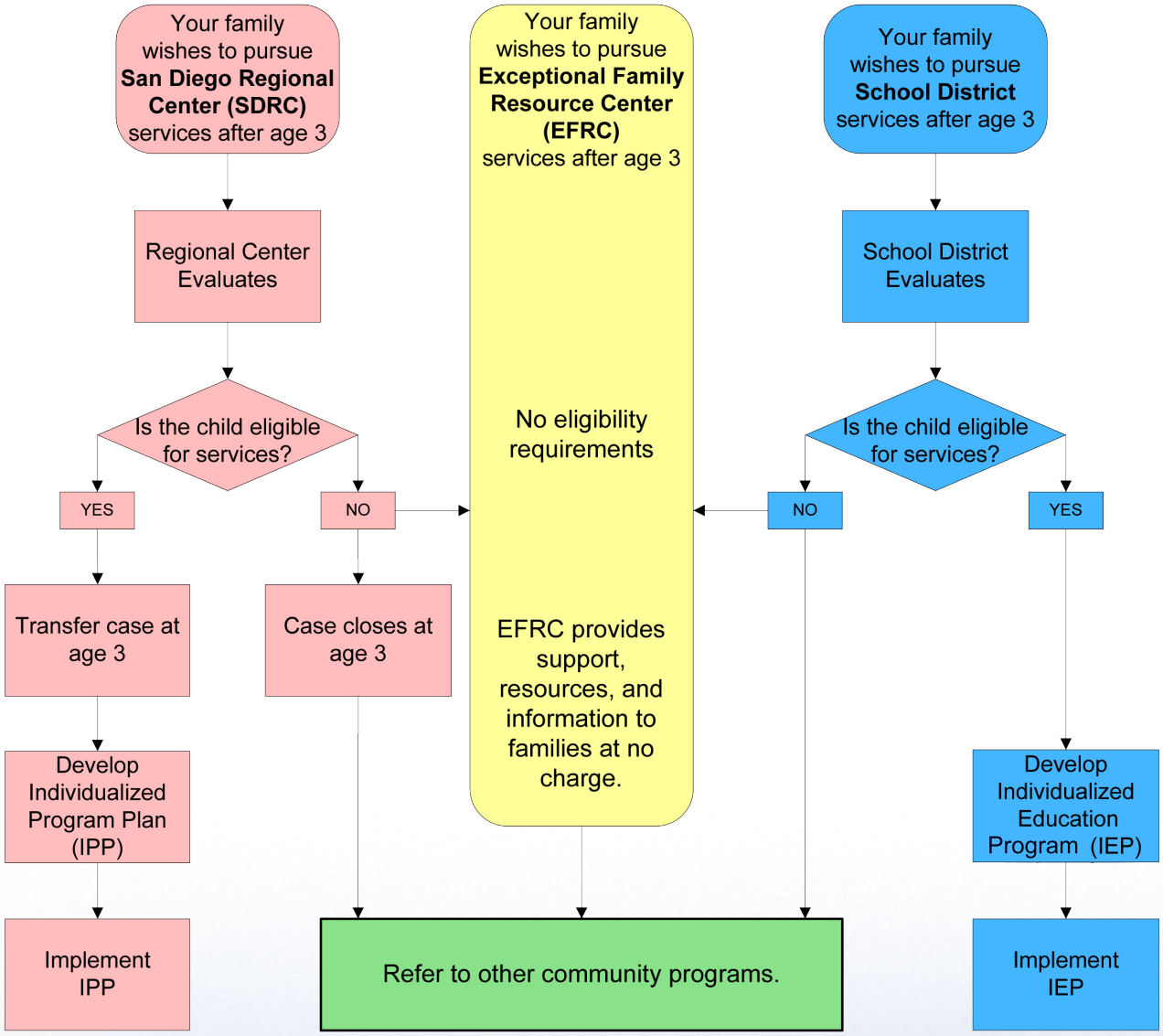
When your child turns three, eligibility requirements for continued services by school districts, the regional center and early intervention programs vary. Additional help from these agencies may no longer be needed for your child; but, if it is needed, this booklet will help you understand how eligibility for services is determined.

Moving on to other options for your child may bring up a lot of mixed emotions. You will be leaving behind what has become familiar to you and receiving a lot of new information. You will participate in meetings and plan for your child's future. It may help to remember that the decisions you make now do not have to be permanent. It's okay to make plans and change them later if you need to do so.

You may want to talk to someone who is familiar with the transition process. Contact your Service Coordinator, your early intervention provider, or call and speak to another parent from the Exceptional Family Resource Center. Ask lots of questions. We all want to support you as much as we can.

Your Early Intervention Team and EFRC

Does Your Family Wish To Pursue Services After Age 3?



What Is Transition?

At age three, your child will exit the Early Start Program. In Early Start, prior to age three, both the regional center and the infant education program provide services under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and the California Early Start Regulations. After the age of three, eligibility for the services provided by the regional center are defined by the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act. Special education services for preschool and beyond are defined by the Education Code and Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA).

You Will Have Help During The Transition Process!

If your Service Coordinator is provided through the regional center, they will guide you through the transition process

or

If your Service Coordinator is provided through education, they will guide you through the transition process

or

Exceptional Family Resource Center's parents can support you in navigating the transition process with "Parent-to-Parent" support

or

Any combination of the above – just ask!

What Is "Parent-to-Parent" Support?

Some parents have found it very helpful to talk with other parents who have been through the transition to services beyond Early Start and have navigated it successfully. In our community we have a number of peer support options. These options may include phone calls, face-to-face meetings or ongoing parent support groups. Parents working in these programs have received training and have the perspective of having walked a similar path. "**Parent-to-Parent"** support providers are knowledgeable about services and options before and after Early Start. They also know how it feels to make this transition and are able to look back and evaluate how things have worked out over time for their own children and families.

During your family's time in Early Start you may or may not have utilized the Parent-to-Parent support options available in our community. If you have been speaking to a parent from one of the programs, you may find it helpful to talk to them about the transition process your child and family are experiencing. If you are not currently receiving Parent-to-Parent support, you may request this service be added to your IFSP and a parent will contact you. Different programs have different names for these peer support persons.

Parent Support Groups usually serve families with young children and may include families with children who have transitioned out of the Early Start program and are receiving services after age three. If you haven't utilized a parent support group up to this point, you may find it beneficial. If you would like to attend a group, please call any of the numbers below to find out about parent support groups in your community.

"Parent-to-Parent" Support Numbers

Please feel free to call any of the following programs for "Parent-to-Parent" support during your transition process. If you are already working with a parent, you may use the indicated space to record their number to have it handy when you want to contact them in the future.

Exceptional Family Resource Center: 1-800-281-8252

Resource Parent Name _____ Phone #_____

Infant Program

Support Parent Name _____ Phone #_____

What Is Natural Family Support?

Natural family support refers to the activities and other undertakings parents routinely carry out on their own to raise their children.

Natural family support takes many forms and may include:

- ❑ Providing appropriate family outings and developmental activities for your child on a regular basis.
- ❑ Practicing family values and traditions.
- ❑ Seeking services provided by Medi-Cal or family insurance when necessary.
- ❑ Using child care assistance from family and/or friends.
- ❑ Having conversations with other parents and sharing parenting ideas.
- ❑ Accessing church or other faith-based community groups for personal support.

What Are Community Resources?

Community resources include local programs and services parents access on their own to support their child's growth. Examples of community resources include:

- ❑ Participating in resource fairs and other family activities provided by public health and welfare programs, non-profit service organizations and public education institutions.
- ❑ Enrolling their children in:
  - Head Start programs
  - Public and private preschools
  - Mommy and Me classes
  - Parks and recreation programs
  - Public and private child care
  - YWCA/YMCA programs
  - First 5 Healthy Development Services

Note: Plan ahead for Head Start or private preschools as they may have waiting lists and/or only take registration at certain times of the year.

A Transition Planning Meeting Is Required!

If your child is already enrolled in an Early Start program, a transition planning meeting must be held no later than when your child is 2 years 9 months or, at the discretion of all parties involved, as early as 2 years 3 months.

If your child is being referred to Early Start for the very first time and is between 2 years 3 months and 2 years 10 ½ months, he or she must also have a transition planning meeting.

At the transition planning meeting, you, your service coordinator, school district representative and others on the team will discuss and develop a transition Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

The Transition Meeting Will Include:

1. A brief review of your child's current IFSP.
2. A discussion and review of the transition outcome page from your IFSP.
3. A discussion of the assessment process.
4. An overview of the continuum of special education program options.
5. A discussion of timelines and steps for developing an IEP and/or IPP if your child is determined eligible.

What Does 'If Eligible' Mean?

Each agency from which your child currently receives services has its own eligibility criteria.

Your child may or may not continue to qualify for services from those agencies when he or she turns three-years-old.

Discuss your child's possible eligibility for services after age three with your service coordinator or early interventionist.

What Is The Transition Process From Early Start To Ongoing Regional Center Services Beyond Age Three?

Continued regional center services will be based upon the regional center's eligibility criteria and your child's evaluation findings. If you wish to pursue ongoing regional center services after age three, your Early Start service coordinator will:

- With your written consent, request current information from physicians and other specialists who have been monitoring and treating your child.
- Determine if a developmental/psychological and/or medical evaluation is needed to help determine whether your child will be eligible for regional center services after the age of three.
- Arrange for evaluations to be completed at San Diego Regional Center when your child is between 2 ½- and 3-years-old.
- Review available developmental and medical evaluations and reports with a team, which includes a San Diego Regional Center psychologist and physician, to determine if your child meets the eligibility criteria for ongoing regional center services after age three.
- Review the results of the eligibility determination with you.
- Provide you copies of evaluations completed by San Diego Regional Center. With your written consent, these evaluations can also be provided to your school district and other agencies.

Who May Be Eligible For Ongoing San Diego Regional Center Services After Age Three?

Your child may be eligible for ongoing regional center services if it is determined that they have a developmental disability which also constitutes a substantial handicap and is expected to continue throughout life.

A developmental disability is defined by the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act as:

- Intellectual Disability
- Cerebral Palsy
- Epilepsy
- Autism
- Other conditions requiring services similar to those required by individuals with intellectual disability.

What Happens If My Child Is Not Eligible For Ongoing San Diego Regional Center Services?

If your child does not meet the criteria for ongoing SDRC services after age three, your Early Start service coordinator will:

- ❑ Assist you with locating appropriate community resources.
- ❑ Continue to assist you with completion of the transition process until your child turns three-years-old.
- ❑ Complete a final review of the IFSP.
- ❑ Close your child's Early Start case when your child turns three-years-old and exits the Early Start Program.

What Happens If My Child Is Eligible For Ongoing San Diego Regional Center Services?

If your child meets the criteria for ongoing SDRC services after age three, your Early Start service coordinator will:

- Assist you with locating appropriate community resources.
- Continue to assist with the completion of the transition process until your child turns three-years-old.
- Complete a final review of the IFSP.
- Transfer your child's SDRC case to an ongoing SDRC service coordinator when your child turns three years old and exits the Early Start Program.

Your new ongoing SDRC service coordinator will:

- Meet with you and your child to develop your child's initial IPP (Individualized Program Plan).
- Provide continued case management services to your child in the future.

What Is Special Education Part B?

Special Education Part B is Federal law that requires an individualized education program be designed to assist in meeting the unique needs of children with disabilities age 3 to 22 years. Children receive special instruction and services according to their specific needs based upon eligibility criteria and the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Services are provided through your local public school district at no cost to parents.

A local school district representative will attend the transition IFSP meeting and explain in detail what Special Education has to offer and discuss your questions and concerns.

Special Education Settings

If your child is eligible for special education, you will be given the opportunity to decide, together with other members of the IEP team, the least restrictive educational setting or environment that will meet your child's needs.

A full range of placement options must be available to meet the educational needs of all children with special needs. The settings for your child's special education services may range from:

- General education preschool classes located on school district campuses or other locations in the community, including Head Start and Child Development Centers.

TO

- Special Education classes on school district campuses with pull-out options and services if appropriate for your child.

For more information regarding Special Education ask your service coordinator for the booklet "Special Education for Preschoolers."

What Is An IEP?

IEP is an abbreviation for an Individualized Education Program.

It is a written document similar to an IFSP that describes how your school district meets a child's educational needs during the school year.

The IEP documents your child's special education eligibility and the special education services your child will receive.

If it is determined that your child is eligible for special education, the IEP team, which includes you as the parent, will develop written measurable annual goals in all of the areas where your child has identified needs.

These goals, along with recommendations for your child's special education program, will be included in the IEP.

If your child is already enrolled in Early Start, the IEP meeting for enrollment in special education must be held before your child is three-years-old.

However, before an IEP meeting can be held, you will have to give the school district written permission to assess your child to determine eligibility. The district has 60 days from the date they receive the signed assessment plan to evaluate your child and hold an IEP meeting.

Your service coordinator or early interventionist will assist you with the assessment referral process.

Note: Be sure to sign and return the assessment plan right away in order for the district to begin the assessment process for your child.

The Regional Center Has Already Assessed My Child. Will The School District Assess My Child Again?

If your child is a regional center client, the school district will review available assessments provided by the regional center. If their assessments are found to be appropriate and current, your school district has the option, with parent consent, to accept any or all of the assessments for the purpose of determining eligibility.

What Disabilities Qualify For Special Education Services At Age Three?

The disability categories that qualify for special education are provided in federal and state laws. They are:

- Autism
- Deaf
- Deaf-Blind
- Emotional disturbance
- Established medical disability
- Hearing impairment
- Intellectual disabilities
- Multiple disabilities
- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment
- Specific learning disability
- Speech or language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment

If your child is being considered for a referral to Part B Special Education, your school district representative will give you more information about eligibility for special education.

Why So Many Meetings?

Each meeting has a distinct purpose:

- There is a final review of the IFSP to identify your child's progress toward reaching the early intervention outcomes in the IFSP.
- It also provides families with an opportunity for closure.
- The IEP Meeting is held to determine the eligibility for special education at age three and develop the IEP.
- The IPP Meeting is held to develop a written plan for preschool age services through the regional center if your child is eligible at age three.

Informing You Of Your Rights And Procedural Safeguards Is Required!

Procedural safeguards are measures taken to ensure protection of the rights of infants, toddlers and families. Service Coordinators must provide parents with written information about all available procedural safeguards.

- You should already have a copy of Parent Rights in Early Start Under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Your school district representative will review and provide you with a copy of your parent rights and safeguards regarding Part B Special Education Services.
- Your regional center representative will review parent rights and safeguards under the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act for children eligible for regional center services at age three years.

Parent Involvement And Communication

Involvement in your child's preschool program will be different than in the infant program. Your participation in the preschool program is just as important as when you participated in your child's infant program.

Ways to be involved in your child's preschool program include:

1. Communicating with your child's teacher, either by telephone or email.
2. Sending notes to and receiving notes from the teacher.
3. Sending a communication notebook with your child to school each day.
4. Making an appointment to speak with your child's teacher.
5. Reading progress report notes from your child's teacher.
6. Attending IEP meetings and parent/teacher conferences.
7. Observing your child in the classroom.
8. Offering to make materials for the classroom or donating items you no longer use.
9. Joining parent groups at your child's school.

How To Prepare For Your Child's Transition

1. Organize your thoughts. How will a transition to a new setting fit into your life. What are your resources? Are there other family responsibilities and commitments? What are your preferences and priorities?
2. Think about your child's strengths. Identify what you think your child needs to learn in order to develop new skills and abilities. Write down your thoughts. Bring questions, concerns and input with you to the transition planning meeting.
3. Schedule assessments when your child is at his/her best.
4. Follow up with assessment appointments as scheduled. Delay in assessments may cause delays in starting your child's services. Be familiar with the Assessment Plan, including proposed assessments and who will be conducting them.
5. Keep records. Keep a notebook with your documents related to transition planning, assessments, assessment reports, IEP planning, names of contact people, program information and preschool information.
6. Contact parent-to-parent support resources such as your local Exceptional Family Resource Center at 1-800-281-8252. The family resource center offers parent to parent services, support groups, information and IFSP/IEP support provided by parents of children with special needs.
7. Gather information. You may want to explore programs for young children in your community to get ideas about what may best meet the needs of your child and family.
8. Prepare your child and family for the transition. Develop a plan of what needs to be done and who will do it.
9. Discuss the transition process, including the upcoming IEP meeting or regional center eligibility decision, with your service coordinator or school district representative, as needed.
10. Ask questions. If something seems clear at the time of the meeting and later does not, call your Service Coordinator or school district representative. They will be happy to answer your questions or locate the person who can answer them.

Steps To Prepare Your Toddler For Transition

Upon graduation from Early Start, children transition to a wide variety of preschool environments. Consider the ideas below for some suggestions that might be appropriate to prepare your toddler for their transition from Early Start to over age three activities. Each child and family situation is different, so see what feels right to you. Be sure to begin early and talk about it frequently during the weeks before beginning a new situation.

- ❑ Help your child adjust to new situations by practicing separating from you - beginning with short intervals and building up to longer times away from you.
- ❑ Look for a book in the library or make a book about going to preschool and read it to your child frequently.
- ❑ If your child is going to a new school, help them be excited by talking about how much fun it will be at the "big school" or talking about the other children they may meet and all the things they will do and see there.
- ❑ If you know the school your child will be attending, you can make a visit and take pictures of the school, the teacher, where they hang their backpacks. Write a story about it all and be sure to state at the end when they will see mommy or daddy again.
- ❑ If your child will be riding the bus to school, you can begin to create excitement about school buses by pointing out buses in the community or creating your own book with a story and a picture of your child on the bus.
- ❑ Attend other group settings for children such as children's hour at the library or nursery groups at church, day care centers or play groups.
- ❑ Ask your early interventionist for ideas on steps to prepare your child.
- ❑ Talk to other parents about what they did to prepare their child for transition.
- ❑ Make it fun and repeat it often!

More Ideas To Try

_____

_____

_____

_____

Sharing Information About Your Child

The following pages are designed for you to share information about your child. You may complete these forms and take them with you to your child's assessment appointment and/or IEP meeting. Use additional paper if necessary.

Our child's favorite foods are:

_____

_____

Our child's favorite toys and activities are:

_____

_____

Things our child does not like are:

_____

_____

Things that make our child happy are:

_____

_____

Things that make our child sad, angry or frustrated are:

_____

_____

Important people in our child's life are:

_____

_____

Our child likes to do these things with family and friends at home or in the community:

_____

_____

_____

Sharing Information About Your Child (cont.)

Our child communicates his/her wants and needs by:

_____

_____

When our child wants to move around he or she will:

_____

_____

Some of our concerns are:

_____

_____

Our child is really great. Here are some neat things about him/her that we want you to know:

_____

_____

Some of our goals for our child are:

_____

_____

Our child can do these things by him/herself: (eating, dressing, toileting, bathing)

_____

_____

We would like you to know about these health concerns:

_____

_____

We need more information about:

_____

_____

_____

Acknowledgements

The San Diego Early Start Guides for Parents on **Early Start Transition** and **Special Education for Preschoolers** were developed by members of the **San Diego Countywide Early Start Transition Committee** with input from the **San Diego County Early Start Administrators Team** and representatives from the **Exceptional Family Resource Center (EFRC), San Diego Regional Center, and personnel from local school districts.**

We want to acknowledge the hours of effort on behalf of these members toward making this guide useful, meaningful, and accurate.

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SAN DIEGO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Exceptional Family Resource Center

SAN DIEGO REGIONAL CENTER

CALIFORNIA EARLY START for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities and Their Families

Notes:

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San Diego, California 92123
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